

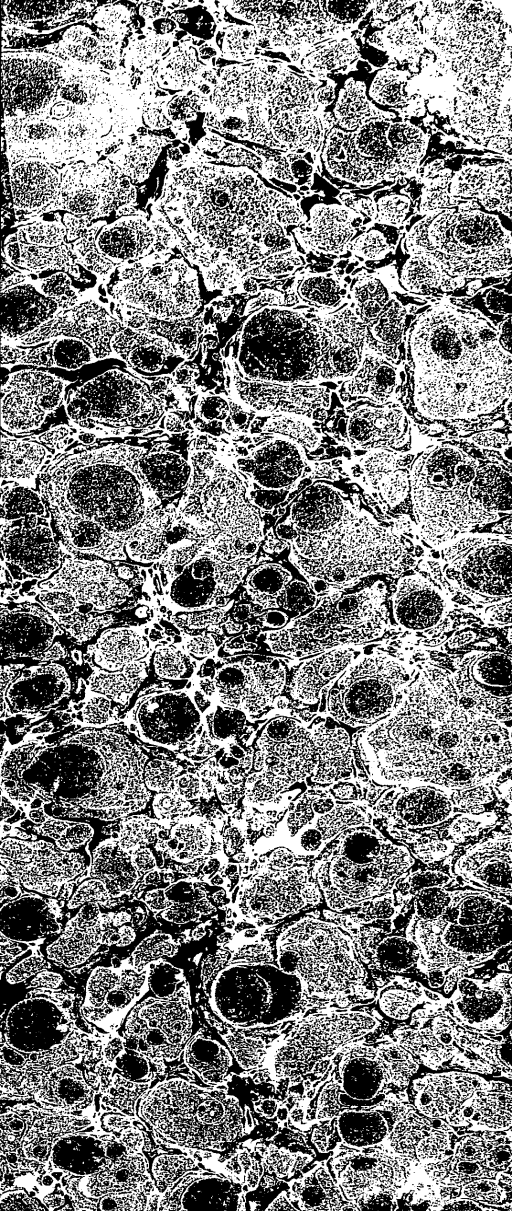
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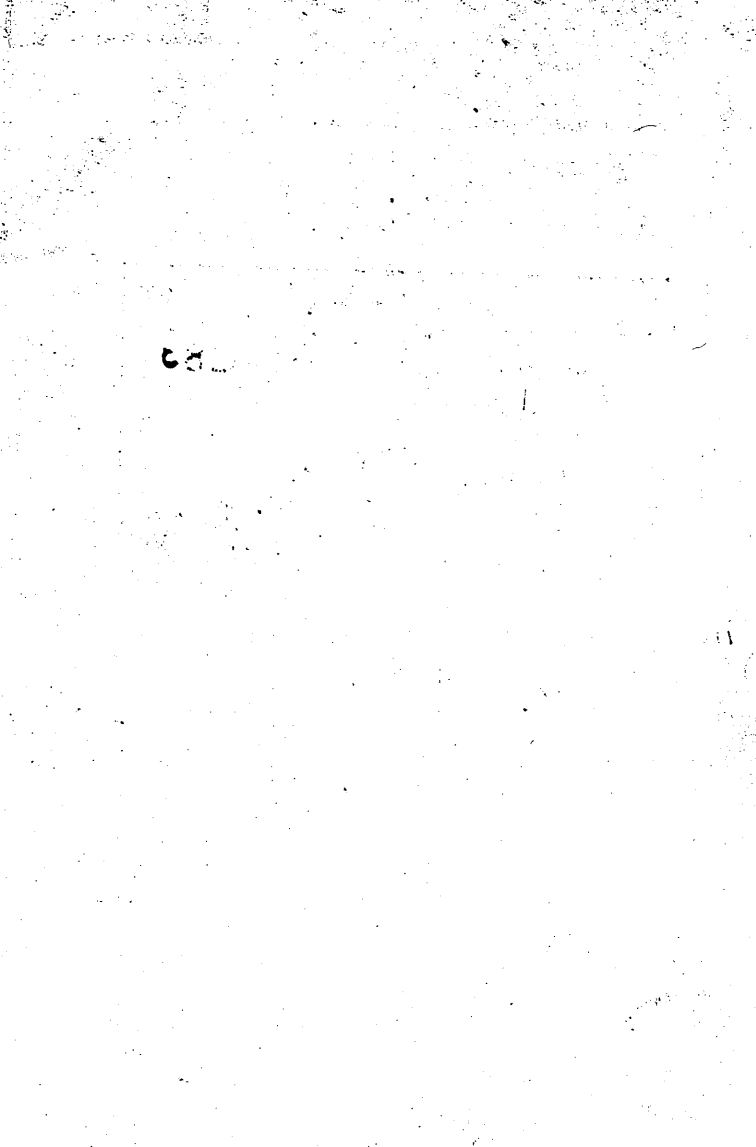
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National Council of the Congregational
Churches of the United States.
The Council Manual

FOR A

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

PREPARED BY

A Committee of the National Council of the Congregational
Churches of the United States.

BOSTON AND CHICAGO

The Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society

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1899

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1896

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INTRODUCTION

At the meeting of the National Council held at Minneapolis in 1892, the following was adopted:—

Whereas, There is great need of a concise manual of Congregationalism for the facilitating of the organization of new churches on the principles of our order, be it therefore

Resolved, That a Committee of seven be appointed to prepare such manual and report the same to the next Council.

The persons whose names are appended as such were appointed as this Committee.

The Committee was, to its profound regret, deprived of the experienced counsel of Dr. A. Hastings Ross, of Michigan, by his death in 1893.

Much time and labor were given to this work, which, owing to the fact that the members of the Committee were widely scattered, was conducted largely by correspondence, as well as by consultation of those who were able to meet.

As a result, a Manual was reported to the National Council meeting at Syracuse, N. Y., in 1895, and was referred to a special Committee, upon the report of which the Council expressed its entire satisfaction with the results of the labors of the Committee, and adopted the following recommendations:—

I. That the present Committee, which has prepared this Manual, be continued, with power to add to its number, if it shall think it desirable to obtain the coöperation of others.

II. That the Committee be requested to publish, at its earliest convenience, through the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society, an edition of this work adapted to general circulation, in an inexpensive form, and that it be given power to make such alterations and emendations as may finally be deemed advisable after receiving and weighing carefully any

suggestions of improvement which may come from brethren in any part of the land, for which purpose copies have already been distributed to the several members of this Council. The manual thus perfected is to be signed by the members of the Committee, and by such other persons as may be joined in consultation; and it is hoped will carry such weight as may be found in the characters, learning, and practical wisdom of the brethren whose names shall be thus appended.

In accordance with these instructions the Committee has submitted its work to careful and repeated revision, and has requested and obtained most valuable aid from the suggestions in its various chapters of those especially fitted to criticise and amend in each. Among those who have thus given important aid are representatives of our Theological Seminaries and of our Missionary organizations, as well as pastors and others of wide experience, who have made a special study along the lines covered by such a work. By Home Missionary Superintendents and others who are frequently called upon to take the lead in the organization of churches, the Committee has been guided in avoiding many practical difficulties in the way, and is assured by those who have tried the Manual in its tentative form that it works easily and well.

It is only just that the Committee should recognize the great obligation which not only it, but the denomination at large, has owed to Drs. Joseph E. Roy and James Tompkins, both of Chicago, for the Manuals issued by them which have served so excellent a purpose for many years, and for their counsel and advice in the present work.

It is believed that the Manual avoids for the most part the difficulties which arise from the diversity in the needs and customs of churches situated in various States, both older and newer, and that it may be readily adopted with slight, if any, modification by any church of our order, old or new. In no case is it permitted to depart from fundamental Congregational principles. There are no points which have not received careful consideration, and the result embodies, as a whole, the deliberate judgment of the Committee.

The result of this work is here presented in two Parts. Part I is the Church Manual, which may be adopted by a particular church and contains: (1) A code of By-Laws adapted to use by any church with at most only slight variations; (2) The generally accepted statements of Congregational doctrinal belief; (3) A form for the reception of members. Part II contains information and suggestion essential to those not familiar with Congregational history, principles and usages, and of value to all: (1) A brief historical sketch of Congregational history; (2) The principles and working of our polity; (3) The method of organizing a Congregational church, so simplified in its details that any group of believers can readily follow its guidance to a complete organization; (4) a few forms of letters missive, and (5) some forms relating to the dismissal of church members.

The result is submitted to the churches with the hope and prayer that it may help those who are in the active work, as well as aid in unifying the methods and in binding together the churches of our order, and that it may by no means increase the distance between them and their brethren, who under other forms of organization serve our Lord, the Christ.

ALONZO H. QUINT,
GEO. M. BOYNTON,
HENRY C. SIMMONS,
DAN. F. BRADLEY,
WM. B. D. GRAY,
EDWIN S. HILL,
WM. D. WILLIAMS,

*Committee of the
National Council.*

In accordance with the instructions of the Council the Manual thus completed has been submitted to a few representative brethren, who permit us to send it forth with their general approval and recommendation to the churches for practical use, and whose names are herewith appended: —

NELSON DINGLEY, JR., LL.D., Moderator of Nat. Council, 1895.
 SAMUEL B. CAPEN, A.M., Chairman Provisional Committee, 1895.
 EGBERT C. SMYTH, D.D., Andover Theological Seminary.
 LEVI L. PAINE, D.D., Bangor Theological Seminary.
 FRANKLIN W. FISK, D.D., LL.D., Chicago Theological Seminary.
 WILLISTON WALKER, D.D., Hartford Theological Seminary.
 ALBERT H. CURRIER, D.D., Oberlin Theological Seminary.
 JOHN K. MCLEAN, D.D., Pacific Theological Seminary.
 GEORGE P. FISHER, D.D., LL.D., Yale Theological Seminary.
 GEORGE W. HENDERSON, D.D., Theol. Dep't, Straight University.
 CHARLES H. DANIELS, D.D., Sec'y, A. B. C. Foreign Missions.
 JOSEPH B. CLARK, D.D., Sec'y, Cong. Home Miss. Society.
 AUGUSTUS F. BEARD, D.D., Sec'y, American Missionary Association.
 LEVI H. COBB, D.D., Sec'y, Congregational Church Building Society.
 JOHN A. HAMILTON, D.D., Sec'y, Congregational Education Society.
 GEORGE LEON WALKER, D.D., Hartford, Conn.
 ALBERT E. DUNNING, D.D., Boston, Mass.
 GEORGE R. MERRILL, D.D., Minneapolis, Minn.
 JAMES TOMPKINS, D.D., Sec'y, Illinois Home Missionary Society.
 JOSEPH E. ROY, D.D., Field Sec'y, Am. Miss. Association, Chicago.
 REV. SULLIVAN F. GALE, Sup't, Cong. Home Miss. Society, Florida.
 REV. JAMES K. HARRISON, Sup't, Cong. Home Miss. Society,
 Northern California and Nevada.
 REV. WINFIELD S. HAWKES, Sup't, Cong. Home Miss. Society,
 Utah and Idaho.
 REV. CEPHAS F. CLAPP, Sup't, Cong. Home Miss. Society, Oregon.

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PART I.

THE MANUAL

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

OF

I.

BY-LAWS.

ARTICLE I.

NAME.

This Church shall be called the.....
Congregational Church of.....

ARTICLE II.

COVENANT.

The covenant by which this Church exists as a distinct body, and which every member accepts, is as follows:—

Acknowledging Jesus Christ to be our Saviour and Lord, and accepting the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice, and recognizing the privilege and duty of uniting ourselves for Christian fellowship, the enjoyment of Christian ordinances, the public worship of God, and the advancement of his kingdom in the world, we do now, in the sight of God and invoking his blessing, solemnly covenant and agree with each other to associate ourselves to be a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as warranted by the Word of God.

We agree to maintain the institutions of the gospel, to submit ourselves to the orderly administration of the affairs of the Church, and to walk together in brotherly love.

And this we do depending upon the aid of our heavenly Father, who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son for our salvation, and of Jesus Christ who hath redeemed us with his blood, and of the Holy Spirit our Comforter and Guide.

ARTICLE III.

CHARACTER.

SECTION 1. *Polity.* Its government is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and coöperation which are common among Congregational churches, and it is in fellowship with all churches which acknowledge Jesus the Christ to be their divine Redeemer and Lord.

SECT. 2. *Doctrine.* It receives the Scriptures as its authority in matters of faith and practice. Its understanding of Christian truth as contained therein is in accord with the belief of the Congregational churches of the United States, and substantially as set forth by unanimous vote of the National Council of 1865, or by the National Council's Commission in 1883, in the form authorized to be printed in this Manual.¹

ARTICLE IV.

MEMBERSHIP.

SECTION 1. *Qualifications.* Its membership consists of such persons as confess Jesus Christ to be their Saviour and Lord, and who, (1) after due examination, either by the Church Committee or by the Church itself, as to their Christian experience, and, if coming from other churches, as to their letters of dismission and recommendation or satisfactory substitutes therefor, and (2) after proposal from the pulpit on some Lord's Day prior to that of their reception, (3) have been accepted by vote of the Church and, having been baptized, (4) enter into its Covenant and subscribe to its By-Laws, and are formally received into its fellowship.

¹ See pages 23-27.

SECT. 2. *Reception.* The reception of members shall ordinarily be upon some Lord's Day when the Lord's Supper is administered, and shall be in the form appended to these By-Laws.¹

SECT. 3. *Duties.* Members are expected, first of all, to be faithful in all the spiritual duties essential to the Christian life; and also to attend habitually the services of this Church, to give regularly for its support and its charities, and to share in its organized work.

SECT. 4. *Rights.* Such members as are in full and regular standing, and do not hold letters of dismission and recommendation, and have attained the age of twenty-one years, and such only, may act and vote in the transactions of the Church.

SECT. 5. *Termination.* The continuance of membership shall be subject to the principles and usages of the Congregational churches, and especially as follows: —

(1.) Any member in good and regular standing who desires a letter of dismission and recommendation to any other evangelical church is entitled to receive it upon his written request. In case of removal to another community he should promptly make such request. This letter shall be valid as a recommendation for only one year from its date, unless renewed, and this restriction shall be stated in the letter.

(2.) If a member desires to join a religious body with which this Church is not in fellowship, or which would not receive its letter, the Church may, at his request, give him a certificate of his good standing and terminate his membership.

(3.) If a member in good standing request to be released from his covenant obligations to this Church for reasons which the Church may finally deem satisfactory,

¹ See pages 28-32.

after it shall have patiently and kindly endeavored to secure his continuance in its fellowship, such request may be granted and his membership terminated.

(4.) The Church may also, after due notice and hearing and kindly effort to make such action unnecessary, terminate the membership of persons for the space of two years non-resident, or for the same space of time not habitually worshipping with the Church, or for the same space of time not contributing to its support according to the system prescribed by the Church or in some way satisfactory thereto.

(5.) Should a member become an offence to the Church and to its good name by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, or by persistent breach of his covenant vows, the Church may terminate his membership, but only after due notice and hearing, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and amendment.

(6.) The membership of no person shall be terminated (except by letter) at the meeting when the recommendation for such action is made.

SECT. 6. *Restoration.* Any person whose membership has been terminated may be restored by vote of the Church, if for any offence, upon evidence of his repentance and reformation, or, if on account of continued absence, upon satisfactory explanation.

ARTICLE V.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES.

SECTION 1. The officers and committees shall be as follows:—

(1.) A Pastor, to be chosen and called by the Church

whenever a vacancy occurs, and to be installed by Council when the Church and Pastor shall so agree.

(2.) A Clerk, to be chosen at each annual meeting to serve for one year and until his successor shall be chosen and qualified.

(3.) . . . Deacons, one of whom shall be elected at each annual meeting to serve for a number of years equal to the number of deacons.¹

(4.) A Treasurer, to be chosen at each annual meeting to serve for one year and until another shall be chosen in his stead.

(5.) A Superintendent of the Sunday-school, to be chosen at each annual meeting.

(6.) A Church Committee, to act with regard to the spiritual concerns of the Church, which shall consist of the above-named officers.

(7.) [If the Church property and the support of public worship are to be in the hands of the Church] : —

A Board of . . . Trustees, one third of whom shall be elected at each annual meeting to serve for three years and until their successors shall be appointed, to hold in trust the property of the Church, if the laws of the State so require, and to manage its financial and business affairs, — always under the direction of the Church.²

¹ In organizing a church the Deacons should be elected to serve for one, two, three, or more years, respectively, according to the number of Deacons. This section may be suitably altered to meet the preference of any church in regard to term of office. The fraction of a year up to the next annual meeting should be regarded as a full year. In accordance with the practice of some churches, the following may be added by special vote if the Church so desires: —

“No person shall be eligible to reelection as Deacon, after serving a full term as such, until after an interval of one year.”

² As to the election of these officers the Church should carefully consider the laws of the State in which it is situated.

OR

A Prudential Committee, which shall consist of three or more as may be determined at the time, to have charge, under the direction of the Church, of its financial and business affairs, to be chosen at each annual meeting, and to serve for one year.

(8.) All the officers and committees named in the above sections shall be elected by ballot, and all elections shall be determined by a majority of the votes cast by the members present who are qualified to vote.

(9.) The Church may also choose a Music Committee and such other committees as it may deem advisable.

SECT. 2. The Pastor shall have in charge the spiritual welfare of the congregation; he shall preach the Word and have in his care the stated services of public worship, and shall administer the sacraments. He shall preside at all meetings of the Church, except as limited in Article VIII, Sect. 2 (4), relating to business meetings.

SECT. 3. The Clerk shall keep a complete record of the transactions at all business meetings of the Church, which shall be read for approval at the next following special business meeting, and also of the Church Committee and of the Prudential Committee, or of the Board of Trustees, if either of these bodies shall be chosen. He shall secure the signatures of members to the By-Laws, and keep a register of their names with dates of admission and dismissal or death, together with a record of baptisms. He shall also notify all officers, members of committees, and delegates of their election or appointment. He shall issue letters of dismissal and recommendation voted by the Church, preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give legal notice of all meetings where such notice is necessary, as indicated in

these By-Laws. The Clerk shall be sworn if required by the law of the State.

SECT. 4. The Deacons shall provide for the Lord's Supper and aid in its administration, and shall care for the poor, calling upon the Treasurer, by vote as a board, at their discretion, for any funds in his possession held for these purposes.

SECT. 5. The Church Committee shall examine and propound candidates for admission to the Church, shall provide for the supply of the pulpit in any vacation of the Pastor, shall decide on objects for regular or special collections when the Church has not acted thereon, shall have regard to discipline as provided in the article relating to that subject, and shall be watchful for the spiritual interests of the Church. It shall make a written report at each annual meeting of the matters under its charge.

SECT. 6. The Treasurer shall keep separate accounts as follows :—

(a) Of all moneys contributed at the Lord's Supper, which shall be primarily devoted to the relief of the poor, and which contributions, together with all other moneys given for that purpose, he shall hold subject to the order of the Board of Deacons. (b) Of all moneys raised for the objects of Christian benevolence, to be paid by him to the several persons or societies entitled thereto. (c) Of all moneys received by him for the support of public worship or of any department of church work, to be paid out on the order of the Church or of any persons or committees authorized by the Church therefor.

All the Treasurer's accounts shall be kept distinct from all other accounts, and all deposits made, and all checks drawn by him shall be in the name of the Church.

He shall make an annual written report in detail of

his receipts and expenditures, properly audited by some person previously appointed by the Church.

SECT. 7. The Superintendent of the Sunday-school shall have the general oversight and direction of the school, and shall conduct its affairs upon such general plans and in such methods as may be approved by the Church Committee.

He shall, at the annual meeting of the Church, present a written report of the work of the school during the year, with such recommendations as he may deem wise.

ARTICLE VI.

PROPERTY AND FINANCES.¹

The Trustees or Prudential Committee shall have the actual care of the place of worship, but shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the Church authorizing such action. They shall provide, under the direction of the Church, for the raising of money for the support of its

¹ The form of administration here proposed is prepared to meet the needs of incorporated churches in different States. Such a church should adopt, according to its circumstances, one of the two names given and cancel the other. "Trustees" will be proper where that name is required by law and where the Church is not connected with any parish. In some States the Trustees hold the property for the church. "Prudential Committee" will be proper for an incorporated church not connected with any parish or religious society nor existing in a State where Trustees are required by law. In the case of a church not incorporated connected with an existing parish or religious society which controls the support of public worship, as is still somewhat extensively found in the older States, the following should be substituted for this article:—

"The Church shall from time to time appoint committees to coöperate with the parish or religious society with which it is or may be connected in the selection or the dismissal of a Pastor or in the furtherance of other joint interests."

public services, shall have general charge of its finances other than moneys contributed at the Lord's Supper or for any charitable or benevolent objects, shall authorize and direct the Treasurer as to the payment of moneys under their control, shall provide for the proper auditing of his accounts unless the Church shall appoint an auditor, and may, at their discretion, call meetings of the Church for matters with which they are concerned. They shall make at the annual meeting a detailed report in writing of all their transactions during the year.

If the Church shall elect Trustees, this body shall hold in trust any property so required to be held by the laws of the State.

ARTICLE VII.

ORGANIZATIONS.

The Church regards as integral parts of itself all organizations formed for the purposes of ministration and which use the facilities of the Church property. Of all such organizations the Pastor shall have general oversight, and the Church will expect a report from each at its annual meeting.¹

ARTICLE VIII.

MEETINGS.

SECTION I. *For Worship.* (1.) Public services shall be held statedly on the Lord's Day and on some regular evening of each week.

¹ It has been found advantageous in some churches to provide for occasional or stated meetings of the heads of all the several departments of Christian work for consultation, to insure unity in work and to avoid possible interference of plans and appointments. This is frequently called the Pastor's Council.

(2.) The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at such regular dates as the Church may, from time to time, determine; and unless otherwise ordered, upon the first Lord's Day of each alternate month beginning with January. The midweek meeting next preceding shall be devoted to a Preparatory Service.

(3.) Occasional religious meetings may be appointed by the Pastor at his discretion, or by vote of the Church.

SECT. 2. *For Business.* (1.) At any of the regular meetings for worship the Church may, without special notice, act upon the reception of members previously propounded or upon the dismissal of members to other churches, and upon the appointment of delegates to councils and conferences of churches, but not upon other business.

(2.) The Pastor may, and shall, when requested by the Church Committee, call from the pulpit special business meetings, the particular object of the meeting being clearly stated in the notice.

Special meetings of the Church shall also be called by the Clerk upon the written application of any five adult members specifying the object thereof, which notice shall be read at the public service on the Lord's Day next preceding the day fixed for such meeting. No special meeting shall be held on the same day on which the notice is given.

(3.) The annual meeting of the Church shall be held on¹..... at which time the annual reports shall be presented and officers elected, and such other business transacted as may be specified in the call or authorized in the By-Laws. This meeting shall be called by the Clerk in the manner specified in the paragraph next preceding.

¹ See foot-note p. 50.

(4.) At all meetings for business called by the Clerk, a chairman shall be chosen by vote of the Church; but at all other meetings the Pastor shall preside, except that in his absence, or when the business relates to himself, the Church shall elect a chairman.

(5.) At the annual and all special meetings . . . members shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

ARTICLE IX.

DISCIPLINE.

SECTION 1. Should any unhappy differences arise between members, the aggrieved member shall follow, in a tender spirit, the rules given by our Lord in the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew.

SECT. 2. Should any case of gross breach of covenant, or of public scandal, occur, the Church Committee shall endeavor to remove the offence, and if such effort fail shall report the case to the Church.

SECT. 3. If the Church vote to entertain a complaint, which must be made in writing, it shall appoint a reasonable time and place of hearing and notify the person in question thereof, furnishing him with a copy of the charges.

SECT. 4. At such hearing, the accused member may call to his aid any member of the Church as counsel. If he shall not present himself at the time appointed, or give satisfactory reasons for his neglect so to do, the Church may proceed in his absence.

SECT. 5. All such proceedings should be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance, but should an adverse decision be reached, the Church may proceed to admonish or to declare the offender to be no longer in the membership of the Church.

SECT. 6. In case of grave difficulty the Church will be ready, if requested, to ask advice of a mutual council.

ARTICLE X.

AMENDMENTS.

These By-Laws may be amended by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at any annual meeting of the Church, or at a meeting specially called for that purpose, the proposed amendment being inserted in the call; but no change shall be made in Articles II and III, entitled "Covenant" and "Character," except at an annual meeting, and by a three-fourths vote of all the members of the Church entitled to vote, said proposed change having been laid before the Church in writing at a business meeting not less than one month before the time of the proposed action, and read from the pulpit on the Lord's Day next succeeding such proposal.

II.

CONGREGATIONAL STATEMENTS OF
DOCTRINE.

THE BURIAL HILL DECLARATION OF FAITH ADOPTED
BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL, 1865.

Recognizing the unity of the Church of Christ in all the world, and knowing that we are but one branch of Christ's people, while adhering to our peculiar faith and order, we extend to all believers the hand of Christian fellowship, upon the basis of those great fundamental truths in which all Christians should agree. With them we confess our faith in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the only living and true God; in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, who is exalted to be our Redeemer and King; and in the Holy Comforter, who is present in the Church to regenerate and sanctify the soul.

With the whole Church we confess the common sinfulness and ruin of our race, and acknowledge that it is only through the work accomplished by the life and expiatory death of Christ, that believers in him are justified before God, receive the remission of sins, and, through the presence and grace of the Holy Comforter, are delivered from the power of sin and perfected in holiness.

We believe also in an organized and visible Church, in the ministry of the Word, in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in the resurrection of the body, and in the final judgment, the issues of which are eternal life and everlasting punishment.

We receive these truths on the testimony of God, given through Prophets and Apostles, and in the life, the miracles, the death, the resurrection, of his Son, our divine Redeemer, — a testimony preserved for the Church in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which were composed by holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Affirming now our belief that those who thus hold "One Faith, one Lord, one Baptism," together constitute the one Catholic Church, the several households of which, though called by different names, are the one body of Christ; and that these members of his body are sacredly bound to keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," we declare that we will coöperate with all who hold these truths. With them we will carry the gospel into every part of the land, and with them we will go into all the world, and "Preach the gospel to every creature." May He to whom "all power is given in heaven and earth" fulfil the promise which is all our hope: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." To Him be praise in the Church forever. Amen.

THE STATEMENT OF DOCTRINE

PRESENTED IN 1883 BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL COMMISSION, IN THE FORM AUTHORIZED FOR THIS PURPOSE IN 1895.

I. We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who is of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made;

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who is sent from the Father and Son, and who together with the Father and Son is worshiped and glorified.

II. We believe that the Providence of God, by which he executes his eternal purposes in the government of the world, is in and over all events; yet so that the freedom and responsibility of man are not impaired, and sin is the act of the creature alone.

III. We believe that man was made in the image of God, that he might know, love, and obey God, and enjoy Him forever; that our first parents by disobedience fell under the righteous condemnation of God; and that all men are so alienated from God that there is no salvation from the guilt and power of sin except through God's redeeming grace.

IV. We believe that God would have all men return to him; that to this end he has made himself known, not only through the works of nature, the course of his providence, and the consciences of men, but also through supernatural revelations made especially to a chosen people, and above all, when the fulness of time was come, through Jesus Christ his Son.

V. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the record of God's revelation of Himself in the work of redemption; that they were written by men under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit; that they are able to make wise unto salvation; and that they constitute the authoritative standard by which religious teaching and human conduct are to be regulated and judged.

VI. We believe that the love of God to sinful men has found its highest expression in the redemptive work of his Son; who became man, uniting his divine nature with our human nature in one person; who was tempted like

other men, yet without sin ; who, by his humiliation, his holy obedience, his sufferings, his death on the cross, and his resurrection, became a perfect Redeemer ; whose sacrifice of himself for the sins of the world declares the righteousness of God, and is the sole and sufficient ground of forgiveness and of reconciliation with him.

VII. We believe that Jesus Christ, after he had risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, as the one Mediator between God and man, he carries forward his work of saving men ; that he sends the Holy Spirit to convict them of sin, and to lead them to repentance and faith ; and that those who through renewing grace turn to righteousness, and trust in Jesus Christ as their Redeemer, receive for his sake the forgiveness of their sins, and are made the children of God.

VIII. We believe that those who are thus regenerated and justified grow in sanctified character through fellowship with Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and obedience to the truth ; that a holy life is the fruit and evidence of saving faith ; and that the believer's hope of continuance in such a life is in the preserving grace of God.

IX. We believe that Jesus Christ came to establish among men the kingdom of God, the reign of truth and love, righteousness and peace ; that to Jesus Christ, the Head of this kingdom, Christians are directly responsible in faith and conduct ; and that to him all have immediate access without mediatorial or priestly intervention.

X. We believe that the Church of Christ, invisible and spiritual, comprises all true believers, whose duty it is to associate themselves in churches, for the maintenance of worship, for the promotion of spiritual growth and fellowship, and for the conversion of men ; that these

churches, under the guidance of the Holy Scriptures and in fellowship with one another, may determine — each for itself — their organization, statements of belief, and forms of worship; may appoint and set apart their own ministers, and should coöperate in the work which Christ has committed to them for the furtherance of the gospel throughout the world.

XI. We believe in the observance of the Lord's Day, as a day of holy rest and worship; in the ministry of the Word; and in the two Sacraments, which Christ has appointed for his Church: Baptism, to be administered as the sign of cleansing from sin, of union to Christ, and of the impartation of the Holy Spirit; and the Lord's Supper as a symbol of his atoning death, a seal of its efficacy, and a means whereby He confirms and strengthens the spiritual union and communion of believers with himself.

XII. We believe in the ultimate prevalence of the kingdom of Christ over all the earth; in the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; in the resurrection of the dead; and in a final judgment, the issues of which are everlasting punishment, and everlasting life.

III.

FORM FOR THE RECEPTION OF MEMBERS.

The persons to be received on confession of their faith coming, as their names are called, before the congregation, the minister may repeat the following or other Scripture passages :—

“What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.”

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

The minister shall then say :—

Dearly beloved, called of God to be his children through Jesus Christ, we give hearty thanks to Him, who, by his Spirit, has opened your eyes to see and your hearts to receive Jesus as your Saviour and Lord, and who has inclined you to present yourselves at this time to make confession of Him.

With the saints of old, with the Church throughout the world, and with us, your fellow-believers, you join in humbly and heartily confessing your faith in the Gospel, saying:—

The members of the Church, together with those to be received, here rise and repeat the Apostles' Creed.

Confession of Faith I believe in God the FATHER Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in JESUS CHRIST, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the HOLY GHOST, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven; and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the HOLY GHOST; the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

[Or instead of the above, the following form (which is mainly a variation in the translation and substantially equivalent) may be used if preferred by the church:—

I believe in God the FATHER Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in JESUS CHRIST, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the HOLY SPIRIT, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven; and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the HOLY SPIRIT; the Holy Church Universal, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the dead; and the life everlasting. Amen.]

The members of the Church will again be seated.

Thus confessing with us and with the Church universal your Christian faith, in the presence of God and of his people, you publicly enter into his covenant of grace.

Having truly repented of your sins and heartily forsaken them, you devote yourselves to the love,
Consecration obedience, and service of Jesus Christ; you take his Word as the law of your life and the Holy Spirit as your Comforter and Guide; and trusting

in his grace to confirm and strengthen you, you promise to follow him in all things, to walk with his disciples in love, and to live for his glory. Do you so promise?

Response, I do.

Those who have been previously baptized are addressed as follows :

Do you who are children of the covenant now accept for yourselves the seal of baptism into the name
Baptism of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, to which faith and love brought you in childhood?

Response, I do.

The God of all grace, who hath called you unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Those who have not been previously baptized are thus addressed :—

Acknowledging the divine authority of Christian baptism, you now receive it as a sign of the washing of regeneration, which you trust has been wrought in you by the Holy Spirit, and as a seal of God's covenanted grace.

Baptism should here be administered as follows :—

I baptize thee into¹ the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Minister shall then say :—

And now to you who are faithful to these solemn promises and engagements towards God, he is pleased to declare by his Word his promises and engagements towards you, assuring to you the free and full forgiveness of your sins ; and pledging all sufficient aid, upon which you may joyfully rely, in the
Divine Promise

¹ This is the translation of the Revised Version, and is accurate and proper.

great work which you have undertaken. He promises that he will be your God, your Father, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier, Teacher, and Guide. He covenants with you, that in the day of trial and temptation he will cheer and strengthen you; that he will cause all things to work together for your good; that nothing shall separate you from his love; and that at death your ascended Lord will receive you to himself, that where he is there you may be also.

Those to be received by letter or certificate from other churches now either come forward or rise as their names are called. The Minister shall greet these, saying :—

Kindred in Christ, who come acknowledging the vows you made when first you declared your faith in Christ, we bid you welcome. We greet you as fellow-laborers in his service, and fellow-travellers to his promised rest.

Addressing all those entering into the membership of this Church, the Minister shall say :—

Beloved in the Lord, baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, you have
Covenant confessed the faith of Christ before witnesses
with the and have given yourselves to God in His ever-
Church lasting covenant of grace. And now accepting, according to the measure of your understanding of it, the system of Christian truth held by the churches of our faith and order, and by this church into whose fellowship you now enter, you cordially unite yourselves with this church of Christ, adopting as your own the covenant by which it exists; you promise to pray and labor for its edification and fruitfulness; to help in sustaining its worship, its activities, and its charities; and to live with us in Christian fellowship. Do you so promise?

Response, I do.

The members of the Church here rise, and the Minister shall say:—

We, then, the members of this Church, do affectionately welcome you into this household of faith. We pledge to you our sympathy, our help, and our prayers that you may evermore increase in the knowledge and love of God. We trust that by His grace we may all walk worthy of the calling wherewith we were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. God grant that, loving and being loved, serving and being served, blessing and being blessed, we may be prepared while we dwell together on earth for the perfect fellowship of the saints above.

Here the Minister may give to each the hand of fellowship, with some appropriate passage of Scripture; after which may be pronounced one of the following benedictions:—

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

PART II.

INFORMATION AND SUGGESTION.

I

BRIEF HISTORICAL VIEW.

"Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, *even* the Christ."
—Matt. 23: 10.

The fact that the word "church" is equivalent to a particular "congregation" or "assembly" at once suggests what we find in the New Testament, that the apostolic "church," as an organization, was purely a local body. We find a church in Jerusalem, a church in Antioch, a church in Corinth; but when we look over a broader territory, embracing different localities, we find "churches," and not a national or provincial "church." Thus: "Confirming the churches"; "The churches of Christ salute you"; "The churches of Galatia"; "The churches of Asia salute you"; "The churches of Macedonia"; "John to the seven churches in Asia"; "Hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." All the churches were in fellowship, but there is no sign of any organized "church" broader than the local congregation.

Each of these local churches had pastors and teachers, sometimes called from their work bishops, *i.e.*, overseers. But it is evident that the word "bishop" in the New Testament never denotes any officer except an officer of a single local church. Its use in any other sense is not sustained by the New Testament. Each church, it is apparent, had the power of discipline residing in its own membership, and not in its officers alone, and certainly not in any body outside of or above itself. The apostles had supervision, but although one vacancy was filled from those who had "seen the Lord," to make the whole

number twelve, when they died no persons were appointed to fill vacancies, though Paul was added to their number, being prepared therefor by a special vision.

The great changes through which a consolidated "church" came into being destroyed the original system. When, centuries afterward, the great Reformation began, the "churches" began to emerge from obscurity. But even the English Reformation did not complete its work. Many reformers, however, endeavored to secure a return to primitive government, but persecution attended their efforts. Many Congregationalists were fined and imprisoned. The first known modern Congregational church completely and formally organized was established in London, England, in 1592; being preceded, however, by movements in the same direction in 1580 and even as early as 1567. The last Congregational martyrs to suffer death were John Greenwood and Henry Barrowe, executed April 6, 1593, and John Penry, May 29, following. Congregationalists in England secured practical religious liberty when Oliver Cromwell, one of the greatest of their number, became ruler of England in 1653.

The church in Scrooby, England, gathered in 1606, being moved by the tyranny which insisted upon the established form of worship, which forbade dissenting assemblies, and which imposed ministers upon parishes and congregations without consent of the people, had, however, escaped through persecutions and various hindrances to Holland in 1607-8, settling in Leyden in the following year.

There for eleven years they lived together "in love and peace and holiness" and in good repute, rejoicing in their religious liberty, but in obscurity and amid poverty and hardship, and troubled much by the influences which

surrounded their children. They were failing also to carry out their exalted missionary purpose. For these reasons a portion of the church set sail for the western continent, and, December 21 (N. S.), 1620, landed at Plymouth, Mass., most of the remainder coming a few years later.

Considerations somewhat similar to those which brought the Plymouth Pilgrims across the ocean induced more than 20,000 representatives of the English Puritans to seek New England between 1628 and 1640. Under the stimulus of this emigration over thirty Congregational churches were organized before the last-named year was reached. Of these some of the more conspicuous, by reason of age or influence, were Salem (1629), Boston (1630), in Massachusetts; and Hartford (1632), New Haven (1639), in Connecticut. Eventually, Congregational churches were established all over New England.

The State organizations date as follows: Connecticut, 1709; Vermont, 1796; Massachusetts, 1803; Rhode Island, 1809; New Hampshire, 1809; Maine, 1826. Outside of New England, beginning with New York in 1834, similar organizations have followed, in which all the churches of our order, now found in every State and Territory of the Union except Delaware, are united.

Congregationalists have always believed in education. They originated the common school system of our country. Beginning with Harvard in 1636, followed by Yale, Dartmouth, Williams, Bowdoin, Middlebury, Amherst, they have established colleges and universities wherever they have gone, in the West and South, until these number thirty-four outside of New England. Beginning with Andover (organized in 1808), they have seven distinctively

theological seminaries, including Bangor, Yale, Hartford, Oberlin, Chicago, and Pacific. In addition to the seminaries represented in the National Council, there are theological departments connected with some of the institutions established by the American Missionary Association in the South.

At the beginning of the present century, many leading Congregationalists opposed the establishment of Congregational churches beyond New England. They doubted whether, in the new settlements, Christians were capable of local self-government. Hence they favored the establishment of a polity which should place power in some superior judicatory. The "Plan of Union" adopted in 1801, finally abrogated in 1852, also lost many hundreds of churches to the Congregational body. Before the latter date, however, devoted men had begun to carry the gospel westward and southward, with the free polity of Congregationalism, and these churches have spread widely over the entire West, and measurably at the South. To this result the earnest work of the several national home societies, — the Home Missionary, the American Missionary, the Church Building, the Sunday-school and Publishing, and the College and Education, — acting for the churches, has largely contributed. Nearly every State and Territory now has an association of the churches for practical consultation.

There have been general American Congregational councils as follows: At Cambridge in 1637; at Cambridge, 1646-8; at Albany, N. Y., 1852; and at Boston, 1865. The National Council, to meet triennially, was established at Oberlin in 1871.

The statistics, in part, as collected in the specified years from 1859 to 1894, are as follows: —

Year.	Churches.	Ministers.	Church Members.	In Sunday Schools.
1859	2,571	2,544	250,452	228,984
1864	2,667	2,798	262,649	277,398
1869	3,043	3,068	300,362	356,502
1874	3,403	3,278	330,391	385,338
1879	3,674	3,585	382,540	437,505
1884	4,092	3,889	401,549	478,357
1889	4,689	4,640	491,985	610,227
1894	5,342	5,287	583,539	753,935

II.

CONGREGATIONAL POLITY.

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

The Scriptures of the New Testament are to be accepted as revealing the will of Christ as to the faith and practice of his disciples, and nothing can be required in the organization and government of his Church which is not directly contained in or plainly warranted by these Scriptures. Within these limits, methods of administration may vary freely according to needs and circumstances, the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit being devoutly sought.

The principles of church government embodied in the Scriptural teachings and in the practice of the apostolic times, we hold to be as follows: —

1. *The Church Universal.* — The visible Church universal is composed of all those who publicly confess their faith in Christ as their Saviour and Lord. All Christians being equally related to the Head of the Church, are equal

in all rights and privileges, and should be in communion one with another.

2. *The Seat of Church Power.*—Neither is a single universal church government claiming authority, nor one which is national, provincial, diocesan or synodical, found in the Word of God; but only local congregations (that is, churches) of believers. These particular churches have all needful power of self-government under Christ, but are to be in recognized communion and coöperation with each other, including all evangelical churches of whatever name which will accept such fellowship. These two features, namely, self-government in the local church, and fellowship between all churches with its privileges and obligations, are the cardinal features of the polity held by Congregationalists.

3. *The Local Church.*—“Those believers who dwell together in one place become a church by their recognition of each other, and their mutual agreement to observe Christ’s ordinances in one society.”¹

To do this they require no consent or authority from without. The church thus constituted has power to make its own rules, select its own officers, choose and call its own pastor, adopt its own form of worship, and manage its own affairs.

4. *The Fellowship of the Churches.*—But inasmuch as all evangelical churches should be in communion one with another, they should extend to each other the formal recognition of that fellowship, and manifest it by assisting each other with advice and necessary help, by consulting together in all matters of common concern, and by coöperating in work for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom.

¹ Platform of 1865.

While the churches thus coöperating have no power to control the action of any particular church, they may and ought to withdraw their fellowship, after fraternal conference and remonstrance, from any church or minister whose action is scandalous in regard to matters of faith or practice.

5. *The Christian Ministry.* — Men who in the judgment of the churches are called of God to the ministry of the Word are by them to be set apart to that service with prayer and the laying on of hands. The apostolic injunction, "Lay hands suddenly on no man," requires that due examination be first made as to natural gifts, education, knowledge of the Scriptures, Christian experience, and the divine call to preach the Word. Nor is any man to be regarded as retaining fellowship as an ordained minister unless he remains in orderly connection with some body of churches capable of certifying their continued approval. The service of ministers in various other departments of Christian work is necessary, but no man can by virtue of ordination exercise the functions of a pastor in or over any church unless called thereto by vote of that church.¹

II. FELLOWSHIP IN ORGANIZATION.

Christian fellowship requires that Christians treat each other as members of the one household of faith. As

¹ The National Council of 1886 adopted the following resolution, which defines ministerial standing: —

"Resolved, That standing in the Congregational ministry is acquired by the fulfillment of these three conditions, namely: —

"(a) Membership in a Congregational church.

"(b) Ordination to the Christian ministry.

"(c) Reception as an ordained minister into the fellowship of the Congregational churches in accordance with the usage of the State or territorial organization of churches in which the applicant may reside; and such standing is to be continued in accordance with these usages, it being understood that a *pro re nata* council (that is, a council called to consider that special case alone) is the ultimate resort in all cases in question."

opportunity offers, they should exhibit one spirit; they should unite in common prayer and praise; they should sit together at the Lord's table. Christian churches should recognize each other's ministry; they should interchange members who move from one place to another; they should acknowledge the validity of church discipline. But experience has found certain formal methods to be of great use, not only for the recognition of fellowship, but also for the consideration of matters of common duty and interest.

1. *An Ecclesiastical Council* may be called to aid in the organization of a church, or by any church desiring advice, and especially is to be called for ordination, and for the installation or dismissal of a pastor. Such a council consists of a moderate number of Congregational churches, usually contiguous, each represented by its pastor and one delegate; sometimes with the addition of a few persons invited because of their special experience or peculiar relations. A majority of the *churches* invited must be present by pastors or delegates to constitute a quorum. This council dissolves so soon as the business proposed in the call has been completed. Such a council, or its equivalent, is necessary in receiving a church or minister into the fellowship of the churches.

2. Certain permanent *Associations of Churches*, territorial in extent, have also come to be almost universal. They are of great service in discussing matters of common interest, and in promoting the fellowship of the churches, but they are purely voluntary, and they possess no power whatever over the churches. These are as follows:—

(1.) *Local Associations* (or conferences) of neighboring churches, seldom as many as twenty-five churches in number. Some of these associations have ministerial

members also, either with or without the right to vote, whose standing is thus recognized; but in many parts of the country such membership is left to ministerial associations. In some States, these associations of churches are sometimes empowered, by previous vote of the churches in each particular case, to act as an ecclesiastical council.

(2.) *State Associations* of churches, meeting annually and constituted in nearly all cases of delegates from the churches, the pastors of churches being in many States *ex-officio* members. These naturally consider matters of broader interest. In many States the annual meeting of the State Home Missionary Society is held in connection with that of the State Association, which in some cases constitutes that body. The assistance of disabled ministers is also in many States in the first instance provided for by the State Association.

(3.) "*The National Council* of the Congregational churches of the United States," organized in 1871, meets triennially. It is composed of delegates from the local associations (one delegate for each ten churches), and delegates from State associations (one from each, and one for each ten thousand communicants); these delegates being divided between ministers and laymen as nearly equally as possible. The recommendations of this body, regarding the great interests and duties of the churches as a whole, are purely advisory, but naturally exercise great influence. This council can never legislate, hear appeals, or act as a judicial tribunal.

The National Council, at its meeting in Minneapolis in 1892, unanimously passed the following resolution:—

"*Resolved*, That affiliation with our denomination, of churches not now upon our roll, should be welcomed upon the basis of the common evangelical faith, substantial

Congregational polity, and free communion of Christians, without regard to forms or minor differences."

This Council annually issues the Year-Book, giving the list and statistics of the Congregational churches of the United States and of the ministers and licentiates serving them; also the organization of the State and national bodies, and of the national missionary societies and theological seminaries, with brief but comprehensive biographical notices of deceased ministers, and records of the ministerial ordinations, installations, and dismissals of the year.

(4.) In 1891 the first *International Congregational Council* was held in London, England, made up of delegates from all parts of the world. It included one hundred delegates from the British Islands, one hundred from the United States, and one hundred from all other countries. Although without authority over the churches, it manifested the power of unity residing in the fellowship which acknowledges "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and its declarations of opinion were received with profound respect. A second International Council is to be held in the United States about the year 1899.

III. FELLOWSHIP IN WORK.

Most of the organizations through which the Congregational churches carry on their missionary work were in their beginning union societies, originally proposed by Congregationalists but sustained by contributors connected with various evangelical denominations. From these societies the other denominations sooner or later withdrew to prosecute their work apart, either taking with them an equitable share of the field and the funds, or leaving the whole work upon the Congregational churches.

These societies thus formed expended the contributions intrusted to them and reported to the contributors, but the churches, as such, were not represented in the election of their officers nor in their management. The tendency in these late years has been toward a closer relation between the churches and these agencies. A definite representation in their meetings for organization and business has been reached in almost every case.

The six national missionary societies are named below, with the distinctive work of each; the figures are taken from reports made in 1895. They are given in the order of their organization.

It is desirable that every church of our order should give to its members the opportunity for an annual contribution to each of these societies.

1. *The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, organized in 1810.—It conducts twenty missions in Pagan, Mohammedan, and Papal lands, with 571 missionaries and 2,870 native helpers. Forty-one thousand nine hundred members are connected with its 420 churches. Nearly fifty thousand students are in its higher and common schools. By common understanding with other missionary organizations, about one hundred millions of our race have been set apart to this agency for evangelization. Three Woman's Boards of Missions, respectively located in Boston, Mass., Chicago, Ill., and Oakland, Cal., are auxiliary to it. Its work is regularly set forth in "THE MISSIONARY HERALD," published monthly.

To help in its work, contributions should be sent to its Treasurer at the Congregational House in Boston, or to its District Secretaries in New York and Chicago. To apply for service in its foreign fields, application should be made to either of the Secretaries at the Congregational House,

Boston, to whom also general correspondence should be addressed.

2. *The Congregational Education Society*, organized in 1816. — Its work is threefold: (1) To aid students in their preparation for the ministry. About four hundred and fifty persons receive such needed assistance annually. (2) To aid in establishing and sustaining colleges and academies on home missionary ground. Eight colleges and fifteen academies are on its list. (3) To aid in supporting common and secondary schools among the Mormon and Spanish-American population of Utah and New Mexico. Forty-four teachers are assisted on this field. Its organ is "CHRISTIAN EDUCATION," issued monthly.

To aid its work, contributions should be sent to the Treasurer at the Congregational House, Boston. To secure aid for a student or for an institution, apply to the Secretary at the Congregational House, Boston.

3. *The Congregational Home Missionary Society*, organized in 1826. — Including the work of its auxiliaries, it supports general missionaries and aids in the support of missionary pastors, over two thousand in all. These preach regularly in our own or in other languages in more than thirty-eight hundred places, located in nearly every State and Territory of our land. The States which contribute enough to support their own home missionary work are organized with their own officers and boards of directors, and as auxiliaries send their surplus funds to the National Society. In other States and Territories the society appoints and sustains superintendents of its work. It publishes "THE HOME MISSIONARY" each month, giving information as to its work and needs.

To aid its work churches and individuals are recom-

mended to send their contributions, in auxiliary States, to the Treasurer of the auxiliary society and in all other States to the Treasurer of the National Society. To secure its aid in sustaining a pastor, or in other home missionary work, application should be made in auxiliary States to the State Secretary, in all others to the Secretaries for correspondence at the Bible House, New York City.

4. *The Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society*, organized in 1832. — Through its Missionary Department it supports from forty to fifty superintendents and missionaries, who organize on an average more than five hundred new Sunday-schools each year in needy places, aiding about a thousand others with visits for reorganization and stimulation, and with grants of literature. From sixty to seventy Congregational churches grow each year out of the schools thus planted. It aids in the publication of papers in foreign languages in our own land, and lesson helps in Italy and Bohemia. “THE PILGRIM SUNDAY-SCHOOL MISSIONARY” publishes each quarter statements and illustrations of its work.

Besides this missionary work, the Society conducts two business houses, publishing helps on the Sunday-school lessons, books for Sunday-school libraries, record books for churches and Sunday-schools, and other books. From the profits of the business it contributes several thousands of dollars annually to the missionary work.

Where aid is needed, application should be made to the Superintendent in the State, to whom contributions may also be sent. In other cases correspondence and contributions should be sent to the Secretary or Treasurer at the Congregational House, Boston.

5. *The American Missionary Association*, organized

in 1846. — Its work is (1) among the negroes of the Southern States, 8,000,000; (2) among the North American Indians, 240,000; (3) among the Chinese and Eskimos in America; (4) among the Mountain Whites of the South, 2,000,000. It supports and aids 116 schools, of which 39 are Normal schools to prepare teachers, and 5 institutions for higher education to equip and furnish those who shall be leaders as pastors of churches and teachers of higher schools. The industries are taught in connection with these schools. It has 5 theological schools for the preparation of young men for the gospel ministry. It employs about 650 teachers and missionaries. "THE AMERICAN MISSIONARY" is its monthly publication.

Contributions should be sent to the Treasurer, and correspondence to the Secretaries, at the Bible House, New York City.

6. *The Congregational Church Building Society*, organized in 1853. — Its work is to pay last bills for young churches which cannot build without aid, either by a grant, or by a loan without interest to churches which can pay it back in five years. Aid from the Parsonage Fund is by loan, repaid in quarterly payments through five years. A first mortgage for the whole amount of aid is taken as a safeguard to the church and to prevent alienation of funds. In 1894, 103 churches and 54 parsonages were built. During the history of the society over 2,500 churches have been built with this aid, and more than 500 parsonages. Its work is set forth in "THE CHURCH BUILDING QUARTERLY."

Applications for aid should be made to the Secretary or Treasurer, Bible House, New York. Contributions may be sent to the Treasurer or to the Field Secretaries in Boston, Chicago, or San Francisco.

III.

HOW TO ORGANIZE A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

Any group of Christian people who desire to do so have full power to organize a church, elect officers, and choose and call a minister. The church thus formed would be independent. To obtain the fellowship and co-operation of other churches, which they will certainly need, they should either ask their aid and counsel in organizing, or, if already organized, should seek formal recognition by them, and their expressed fellowship.

I. ORGANIZING WITH THE AID OF A COUNCIL.

The steps in effecting the organization, after such informal consideration and discussion as may have occurred, are as follows : —

1. At a meeting of those interested in such a movement, a chairman and a clerk should be chosen as temporary officers. The clerk should preserve the record of the call for this meeting and of all votes passed and committees appointed. The object of the meeting should be stated, and after prayer the opportunity and duty considered. It should be made clear that the establishment of a Congregational church is for the best interests of those concerned and for the good of the community. This being evident,

2. A list of the proposed members should be prepared, either immediately or by reference to a committee, specifying those who desire to come on confession of their faith, and those who bring letters from other churches or satisfactory substitutes therefor. When this list is completed it may be approved at once. This vote may be taken

separately upon each name reported if so ordered by the meeting. Only those thus included should take part in the further proceedings.

3. It may then be

Voted, That we are ready to proceed to take the necessary steps toward the organization of a church of the Lord Jesus Christ upon Congregational principles.

4. A form of covenant, a statement of Christian doctrine and a form for the reception of members as the basis of the proposed church, and also by-laws for the permanent regulation of its affairs are now to be prepared or selected. The forms given in this manual for all these purposes are recommended, and may be accepted if satisfactory. For this purpose the following votes will be necessary : —

Voted, (1) That the covenant, statement of Christian doctrine and form for the reception of members given in "The Council Manual" be accepted.

Voted, (2) That we accept the code of by-laws given in "The Council Manual," amended as follows : —

[1] By filling the several blanks occurring therein, as follows : —

a. In Article I, by inserting the name of the church, namely (name).

b. In Article V, Sect. 1 (3), by inserting the number of the deacons, namely (number).

c. In Article VIII, Sect. 2 (3), by inserting the date of the annual meeting, namely (date).¹

d. Article VIII, Sect. 2 (5), by inserting the number

¹ It is desirable that this should be placed as soon after the close of the calendar year as possible, to which date the annual reports should be brought. This will be a great help in the prompt publication of the denominational statistics.

of members necessary to constitute a quorum, namely (number).

[2] In regard to financial administration:

a. By accepting in Article V, Sect. 1 (7), either the paragraph relating to Trustees or that relating to the Prudential Committee and excluding the other; or by cancelling both. If the paragraph relating to Trustees is retained, by inserting the number of Trustees, which should be either three, six, or nine.

b. By accepting in Article VI one of the two names, "Trustees" or "Prudential Committee," and excluding the other; or by substituting for this article the form given in the foot-note thereto.

5. If desired, it may here be

Voted, That we approve "The Council Manual" as a whole, including the documents and by-laws already approved by vote, and that it shall be the manual of this church upon its organization.

6. It should then be

Voted, That the covenant, statement of doctrine, form for the reception of members, and by-laws now approved shall go into effect immediately upon the formal organization of the church by covenant.

[If it be deemed expedient, instead of acting at once upon the list of members, the form of covenant, the statement of doctrine, the form for the reception of members, and the code of by-laws, two committees may be appointed, the one to report the list of members, and the other to report upon the remaining subjects here mentioned, which committees may report at once or at an adjourned meeting.]

7. When the by-laws have been adopted, a clerk and two or more deacons, as determined by the by-laws, should be chosen by ballot, their term of service to begin with the formal organization of the church.

In the first election of deacons a preliminary vote should be passed, according to the number of deacons to be elected, in form as follows: —

Voted, (1) That we now proceed to elect one deacon to serve until the next annual meeting, one to serve until the end of one year from the next annual meeting, and one until the end of two years from the next annual meeting, etc.

Voted, (2) That this election of officers go into effect upon the formal organization of the church.

8. It is to be noted that the proceedings thus far are preliminary to the actual organization of the church, simply determining the basis on which that organization shall take place. It is the custom of the Congregational churches that an ecclesiastical council be called by those desiring to form a new church, which council, composed of neighboring Congregational churches, considers the need and opportunity of the proposed church and examines into the statement of Christian doctrine and polity which has been approved, and, if the result be favorable, assists in completing the organization and extends to it the fellowship of the Congregational churches. Such council should consist of a moderate number of churches, which should be of those near at hand, if practicable. A small number of individuals whose advice, from their official or special relation, it may be desirable to obtain, may also be invited as a part of the council.

For calling such a council the following votes should be passed: —

Voted, (1) That a council of Congregational churches be requested to meet to aid in completing our organization as a church and to extend to us the fellowship of the Congregational churches.

Voted, (2) That the following-named churches and individuals be invited to constitute said council, namely (names).

Voted, (3) That the form of letter missive given in "The Council Manual" for convening such a council and marked (Form A) be adopted.

Voted, (4) That a committee, namely [—————] be appointed to issue the letters missive, inserting therein such date as may seem desirable; and that this committee present for us to the council the proper records, papers, and statements.

9. When the council is assembled and organized for business, those who have invited the council to meet should first represent the need for and opportunity of the proposed church.

10. They should then present the list of proposed members, the statement of Christian doctrine, covenant, form for the reception of members and by-laws, and the votes by which they have agreed to adopt them. It is assumed that this preparatory work has been done in the manner fully suggested in the preceding sections. If any part of it has been omitted, the proposed church may at once take the action necessary if the council approve.

11. The council should examine, either through a committee or otherwise, the papers presented, the action already taken, and the proposed list of members. The council should then vote whether to approve and proceed to complete the organization. If the vote be favorable,

12. After prayer,

Those who have never before made public confession of faith in Christ will now make that confession, the moderator saying:—

"Do you now publicly confess your faith in Jesus Christ, accepting him as your Lord and Saviour, and do you desire now to come into fellowship with his people in the formation of this church?"

Each one will answer, "I do."

13. Baptism will here be administered to those who have not been previously baptized, which should be done by an ordained minister.¹

14. All the proposed members, their names being read, should then agree to the following covenant or its equivalent, as previously approved by them and now read by the moderator, which is the *permanent covenant* of the church : —

Acknowledging Jesus Christ to be our Saviour and Lord, and accepting the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice, and recognizing the privilege and duty of uniting ourselves for Christian fellowship, the enjoyment of Christian ordinances, the public worship of God, and the advancement of his kingdom in the world, we do now, in the sight of God and invoking his blessing, solemnly covenant and agree with each other to associate ourselves to be a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as warranted by the Word of God.

We agree to maintain the institutions of the gospel, to submit ourselves to the orderly administration of the affairs of this church, and to walk together in brotherly love.

And this we do depending upon the aid of our heavenly Father, who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son for our salvation, and of Jesus Christ, who hath redeemed us with his blood, and of the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Guide.

15. After appropriate prayer, the moderator should at once declare that the church is now duly constituted, and that according to the vote of its members, the statement of Christian doctrine, the form for the reception of members, and the by-laws, as previously approved, do now go into effect, and that the officers previously selected do now enter upon their respective duties.

¹ It is to be understood that the mode of baptism is not arbitrarily prescribed in our Congregational churches.

16. The fellowship of the churches should then be extended by the moderator, or by some other person appointed by the council.

[It is customary at such times to have other religious services, often including a sermon.]

NOTE.—The clerk should copy in full into the record book of the church the covenant, form of reception, statement of doctrine, and by-laws. It is especially desirable that the record of all the meetings connected with the organization of the church should be entered in full in the permanent record book.¹

17. To secure enrolment in the permanent list of the recognized Congregational churches, application for membership should be made to the local conference or association of churches within whose bounds the church is situated. This makes the connection with the denomination complete.

II. ORGANIZING WITHOUT THE AID OF A COUNCIL.

The method previously laid down was formerly the only customary method of organizing a Congregational church. It still has the advantage of obtaining the wisdom of neighboring churches as to the advisability of the proposed organization, secures the active sympathy of the churches in needed cases, and prevents mistakes in the proceedings and form of organization. It is to be commended in all practicable cases.

But in exceptional cases where the immediate convening of a council is difficult, a church can be organized by

¹ The Pilgrim Church Record and Register, sufficient for a church of three hundred members, is published by the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society for this purpose, and may be procured from the Boston or Chicago agencies, or through the State Superintendents. Price, \$2.00 and postage.

those associating, and the formal recognition and fellowship of the Congregational churches may be secured at a later date.

In such cases it will be wise to obtain the presence and counsel of some pastor of experience and standing, or of some official connected with our missionary work.

The action and votes set forth under paragraphs 1-7 should be carefully followed.

It should then be

Voted, That we are ready to enter into covenant with one another as a church.

These steps having been taken, the church may immediately or at some appointed time be constituted in the following manner:—

1. The members who have agreed to organize should select one of their own number, or some ordained Congregational minister from without, as moderator, to preside at this service, the temporary clerk still acting as clerk.

2. The moderator should now proceed according to the order to be followed by the moderator of a council, as set forth in paragraphs 12-15; but he has no authority or power to extend the fellowship of the churches.

III. HOW AN ORGANIZED EVANGELICAL CHURCH CAN OBTAIN FELLOWSHIP.

In obtaining the fellowship of the churches such a church should, at the earliest practicable moment, secure its

1. *Recognition by Council*. — When a church has been formally organized by those constituting it, or when any other organized evangelical church desires to be received into fellowship, it may call a council of Congregational churches for this purpose.¹

¹ For form of letter missive suitable for this purpose see Form B in this manual.

The council, when assembled, will consider the application, and if the evangelical character and orderly organization of the church be found satisfactory, recognition and reception into fellowship may be effected by vote, and a public service held, in which the right hand of fellowship of the Congregational churches extended to the church applying is the important and significant part.

2. *Enrolment by Association or Conference.* — Even in scattered communities it is seldom impossible to convene a council which will be greatly helpful to the new enterprise and to the whole community. If it be practically impossible to call a council either for organization or recognition, as is sometimes the case where the churches are widely separated, application to be received into fellowship may be made to an association or conference of Congregational churches, which, on the same conditions which would satisfy a council, may vote to place the new church on its roll, and thus extend to it the fellowship of the churches.

IV. APPLICATION FOR INCORPORATION.

In case the church is to become a corporate body, the object which is to be stated in the application for incorporation and which in some States would be regarded as the constitution of the church, should read as follows: —

The object of this organization is the promotion of Christian instruction and the support of the public worship of God in accordance with the doctrines and polity of the churches represented in the National Council of the Congregational churches of the United States.

IV.

FORMS OF LETTERS MISSIVE.

According to Congregational principles and usages, an ecclesiastical council may be called by persons desiring help in organizing a church, or by a church for counsel or aid in various cases; and in one contingency, by an aggrieved member of a church. The council is summoned by "Letters missive," so called, sent, by vote of the church, to each church or person invited, and specifying the object; and each copy of the letter missive must contain a complete list of the churches and persons invited. This list cannot be added to or taken from by the church without sending a supplementary letter to each church and person in season for action thereby; nor can the council when assembled increase its own membership with or without consent of the church by the admission of any church or person as an honorary member or otherwise.

A majority of the *churches* invited must be present by pastors or delegates to constitute a quorum. For issuing this letter, a committee is usually appointed by the church, which is by vote authorized to present the case to the council. The forms of letters missive on the succeeding pages are suggested: —

[Form A.]

FROM INDIVIDUALS DESIRING HELP IN ORGANIZING A CHURCH.

To the..... Congregational Church,
in....., GREETING:—

After careful deliberation, and after seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we have come to regard it as our duty and privilege to associate together as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, in this place, and have taken the steps preparatory thereto. We therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on....., the..... day of....., 189....., at..... o'clock..... M., which shall review our proceedings, and consider the need and opportunity for the proposed church; and if the result of such examination be favorable, assist in completing the organization, and extend to it the fellowship of the Congregational churches.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... } Committee
..... } for the
..... } Brethren.

.....
[Date and place.]

The following named churches (and persons) are invited:—

[Names.]

By vote of the associated brethren.

.....
¹ Clerk, *pro tem.*

¹ When the names of the members of a committee are not in their own handwriting, all copies of the letters missive should be authenticated by the actual signature of the clerk.

[Form B.]

FOR THE RECEPTION OF A CHURCH INTO FELLOWSHIP.

The..... Church in.....
To the..... Congregational Church
in....., GREETING:—

This Church, organized as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ upon Congregational principles, earnestly desires the special communion of the Congregational churches, for the enjoyment of their fellowship and participation in common work for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ. We therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on..... the..... day of..... 189....., at..... o'clock..... M., which shall make the necessary examinations into our polity, faith, and practice, and if the result be favorable, extend to us the fellowship of the Congregational churches.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... } Committee
..... } of the
..... } Church.

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows:—

.....
[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

[Form C.]

FOR THE ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION
OF A PASTOR.

The..... *Congregational Church*
in.....

To the..... *Congregational Church*
in....., GREETING: —

This Church, having devoutly sought the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, has united in the choice of Mr. A. B. for its pastor and teacher, and he has responded favorably to its call. We therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate, in an ecclesiastical council to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on, the day of 189....., at o'clock M., which shall review our proceedings and make the necessary examinations, and if the result be favorable, proceed with us to his ordination as a minister of the Word, and his installation as pastor of this Church, and extend to him the fellowship of the ministers and churches.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
..... } ¹ *Committee*
..... } *of the*
..... } *Church.*

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows: —

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

¹ If a church is in connection with an incorporated parish or society, a committee of the parish should also sign the letter.

[Form D.]

FOR ORDINATION WITHOUT INSTALLATION.

The.....*Congregational Church*
in.....

To the.....*Congregational Church*
in....., GREETING: —

Whereas, Mr. A. B., a member of this Church, believing that the Lord has called him to the ministry of the Word, desires ordination in view of special work now before him, namely,¹....., and trusts that he has obtained the preparation of mind and heart necessary to qualify him for its sacred duties, we therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on....., the..... day of..... 189....., at..... o'clock..... M., which shall review our proceedings and make the necessary examination, and if the result be favorable, proceed with us to his ordination and extend to him the fellowship of the Congregational ministers and churches.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
..... } *Committee*
..... } *of the*
..... } *Church.*

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows: —

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

¹ The work should be specified, such as "pastoral service," "foreign missionary work," "home missionary work," "as an evangelist," etc.

[Form E.]

FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A PASTOR.

The Congregational Church
in

To the Congregational Church
in, GREETING: —

This Church, having devoutly sought the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, has united in the choice of Rev. A. B. for its pastor and teacher, and he has responded favorably to its call. We therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on, the day of, 189, at o'clock M., which shall review our proceedings and make the necessary examinations, and if the result be favorable, proceed with us to his installation as pastor of this Church, and extend to him the fellowship of the ministers and churches.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
..... }
..... } ¹ Committee
of the
Church.

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows: —

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

¹ See note to Form C.

[Form G.]

FOR ADVICE IN SPECIAL CASES.

The.....Congregational Church
in.....

To the.....Congregational Church
in....., GREETING: —

Whereas this Church is in circumstances which make it need-
ful that it should obtain wise and godly advice from neighboring
churches whose judgment, it may be hoped, will be guided by
the Holy Spirit, we therefore affectionately request you to be
present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be
constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place
of worship on....., the.....day of.....
189....., at.....o'clock.....M., which shall consider the facts
and questions then to be laid before it, and which shall give to
us such fraternal advice as it may deem important with reference
to the work committed to our hands.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

.....
.....
..... } Committee
of the
Church.

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows: —

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

[Form H.]

FOR ADVICE IN CASE OF INTERNAL DISSENSIONS.

The.....*Congregational Church*
in.....

To the.....*Congregational Church*
in....., GREETING: —

Whereas, the peace of this Church is disturbed by internal differences between brethren, which are injurious to its prosperity and to the cause of Christ; and whereas, in such cases it is the privilege of any church to ask for wise and godly counsel from neighboring churches with the hope of thereby removing the causes of disturbance and securing harmony; and whereas, brethren who differ in their present judgment agree to this reference, we therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate, in an ecclesiastical council to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on....., the..... day of....., 189..... at..... o'clock..... M., to which these difficulties within the Church will be made known, and which, after due deliberations, shall give to us the counsel to which it shall be divinely led.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
..... } *Committee*
..... } *of the*
..... } *Church.*

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows: —

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

[Form I.]

FOR A MUTUAL COUNCIL IN CASE OF
ALLEGED GRIEVANCE.

The..... Congregational Church
in.....

To the..... Congregational Church
in....., GREETING: —

Whereas, Brother A. B., who has been deprived of good and regular standing in this Church by act of the Church, alleges that this action is unjust and improper, and desires that the Church will join with him in calling a mutual council to consider his alleged grievance and advise in reference thereto; and whereas the Church, desiring only that which is according to the rules of the Gospel of Christ, accedes to his request, we therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be constituted (by mutual agreement) as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on....., theday of....., 189....., at..... o'clock.....M., which shall review all the proceedings in this case, make the necessary examinations, and give such advice as it shall find required by Congregational principles in the spirit of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... } Committee
..... } of the
..... } Church.

.....
[Date and place.]

....., Complainant.

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows: —

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church,

.....
Church Clerk.

[Form J.]

FOR AN *EX-PARTE* COUNCIL TO CONSIDER
AN ALLEGED GRIEVANCE.

To the.....Congregational Church
in....., GREETING:—

Whereas the undersigned has been by the act of the.....
Congregational Church in.....deprived of his
good and regular standing in that church, and thereby of his
communion with neighboring churches, which action he holds
to have been erroneous both in method and substance, and an
injury to him as a Christian brother; and whereas, he has re-
quested the Church to join him in calling a mutual council
to ask the advice of neighboring churches in the case, which re-
quest the Church has refused to grant, as he thinks, unreason-
ably; in accordance with the method of relief acknowledged
among our churches, the undersigned affectionately requests you
to be present by pastor and delegate in an *ex-parte* ecclesiastical
council to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet
in....., on....., the.....
day of....., 189.....; at.....o'clock.....M.,
to which shall be communicated all the facts in the case, and
which will be respectfully asked to give such advice as shall be
warranted, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Trusting in your willingness to listen and to aid in securing
the removal of any injury, if such should be found to exist,

Yours in Christian fellowship,

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows:—

[Names.]

V.

FORMS RELATING TO THE DISMISSION OF
CHURCH MEMBERS.I. APPLICATION FOR UNITING IN THE FORMATION
OF A NEW CHURCH.

To the..... Church
of.....

DEAR BRETHREN: —

Being desirous of uniting with other Christian brethren in the formation of a new Congregational church in....., I hereby respectfully request a letter of dismission and recommendation for that purpose, to take effect when such church shall be duly organized and received into the fellowship of the churches.

Yours in Christian fellowship,

(Signed).....

.....189.....

2. LETTER OF DISMISSION FOR THE FORMATION OF A NEW CHURCH.

The *Congregational*
Church of

Sends GREETING: —

This certifies that, a
member in good and regular standing of this Church, is at
.....own request hereby dismissed and affectionately recom-
mended to unite with other Christian brethren in the organization
of a new Congregational church in
When membership in such church shall be completed,
membership with this church will cease.

Yours in Christian fellowship,

(Signed)

Clerk.

..... 189.....

3. APPLICATION FOR A LETTER OF DISMISSION FROM ONE CHURCH TO ANOTHER.

To the *Church*
of

DEAR BRETHREN: —

Being desirous of uniting with the
Church of I hereby respectfully request
a letter of dismission and recommendation to that church.

Yours in Christian fellowship,

(Signed)

Clerk.

..... 189.....

4. A LETTER OF DISMISSION AND RECOMMENDATION.

The..... Congregational Church
of.....

To the..... Church
of..... GREETING: —

This certifies that....., a
member in good and regular standing of this Church, is at
..... own request hereby dismissed and affectionately
recommended to your fellowship and care, and, when received
by you membership with this Church will cease.

By vote of the Church.

.....
Clerk.

....., 189.....

NOTE 1. This letter is good, as a recommendation, for one year only from
its date.

2. The clerk of the church accepting this letter is requested to fill out the
accompanying blank certificate, and return it to the above address as soon as
possible.

5. A CERTIFICATE OF RECEPTION.

To the..... Congregational Church
of.....

This certifies that....., recommended to
our Christian fellowship by you, was, on the..... day
of....., 189....., received into the membership of
the..... Church of.....

Attest,

.....
Clerk.

..... 189.....

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



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UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



45 257 872

